with trade unions in view of the opposition to the scheme;

(d) whether it is a fact that unions and workers are approaching courts for redressal of their grievances; and

(e) whether Government would make the scheme optional in view of the mounting opposition thereto?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY): (a) and (b) According to available information pension under the new Scheme has been distributed among 40,488 beneficiaries. The applications for pension are received and scrutinished by the Regional Provident Fund Authorities. As such the information about number of such applications is not available.

(c) Keeping in view the demands of the Trade Unions a notification has already been issued carrying out such amendments in the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995, as have been found actuarially feasible.

(d) Some local Unions working in few establishments have filed petitions in Courts against the provisions of the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995.

(e) No, Sir.

13

Neglect of Rural Workers

1039. SHRI SARADA MOHANTY: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the large mass of rural workers are being neglected as no attention is being paid by Government to safeguard their interests;

(b) if so, the steps taken to safeguard the interests of the rural workers; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) The problems of rural workers are sought to be tackled through a multi-dimensional course of action viz., improvement of infrastructural facilities, diversification to non-farm activities, skill improvement programmes, financial assistance to promote self employment, optimising the use of land resource and social assistance etc., through a variety of rural development programme like the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Jawahar Rojgar Yojna (JRY), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), Employment Assuracne Scheme (EAS) and National Social Assistance Scheme (NSAS) etc., During the VIIIth Plan, outlay for rural development has been raised from Rs. 10,650 crore to Rs. 30,000 crore. Outlay for animal husbandry, dairy & fisheries has also been substantially raised. Horticulture, piggery, poultry and sheep rearing have been made permissible Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) activities.

Sugarcane Arrears

1040. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:
SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI:

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) the State-wise amount of sugarcane arrears due to farmers at the end of sugar season 1995;

(b) the amount due to farmers in each State as on 31st January, 1996; and

(c) the steps being taken to clear the above arrears and the results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) On the basis of the available information furnished by the sugar factories, the State-wise amount of sugarcane arrears due to farmers at the end of the sugar season 1994-95 (as on 15.11.1995) and for the season 1995-96 (as on 31.01.1996) is at Statement (*See* below).

(c) The responsibility of ensuring timely payments of cane price dues by sugar mills lies with the State Governments